Research Proposal of the Thesis Entitled

Intersecting Margins: A Feminist Exploration of the Narratives of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Walker

Submitted for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy by

Kirti

Enrollment No.: 202306020020

Under the guidance of Dr. Shikha Thakur

Unitedworld School of Liberal Arts and Mass Communication

Karnavati University, Gandhinagar

Introduction:

The theoretical framework of this study aims at analyzing the converging margins by feminist analysis of the narratives in the works *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood, and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. This starts with a strict cross-examination of the spatial and social metaphors of the notion of the margin. The margin is not only a deprivation and as bell hooks used to say, the place of radical openness and resistance in the modern feminist discourse. To pursue the study of the margins of intersection is to begin to deal with the apparatus of intersectionality, the term that goes back to the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, which takes into account the fact that different kinds of social stratification, including race, gender, class, and colonial status never exist in isolation of each other but are all interwoven in a multifaceted web of oppression and agency.

The feminine subject corresponding to agency in the narratives of Morrison, Atwood, and Walker lies in the intersection of these two systems. To Morrison, the margin is determined by the internal and external demands of the white visual regime where the black female child is driven to the background of human value since she will not be able to reflect the colonial aesthetic. The margin has a post-colonial and ecological aspect of meaning to Atwood, where the female character is placed between the civilized and the primitives, the colonizer and the colonized, the human and the animal. To Walker, the margin is a domestic and spiritual border in which the womanist subject needs to repossess the body and labor under the oppressive onslaught of patriarchal violence. The feminist analysis of these stories must get out of monolithic representations of the female gender; it must take into consideration the particularities of the black life in the American North and South and the ontological alienation of the Canadian wilderness. Apparently, this introduces the space of the margin as a deep location of ontological enquiry in which the characters are not victims of the geography, but exist in the process of constructing a counter-narrative. The intersecting of these margins can

be used to have a comparative conversation about how female psyche reacts to erasure, whether it is through the Hollywood cinematic gaze, the patriarchal silence in rural Georgia, or the technological invasion of a modernizing Canada. The margin is thus used in this study as a prism through which to consider the fragmentation and then efforts to reintegrate the feminine self. The second movement of this introductory framework is devoted to the game-changing nature of narrative as a means of feminine reclamation and the changes in the definitions of feminism and womanism which define the works of these three writers. Apparently, with this respect, narrative is being considered as a performative act, one of the ways, in which the marginalized subject can reconstruct a disjointed historical trajectory and establish a consistent identity. The narrative in the work of Morrison is a place of memory or rememory where the trauma of the gaze is revealed to criticize the homogenized metanarratives of Western beauty. The narrative in the prose of Walker is in epistolary and communal mode, which demonstrates a womanist ethos, where the wholeness of the community and the spiritual liberation of the individual are in the first place. *Surfacing*, which can be understood as a linguistic and psychological act of plunging into the depth of the past in order to strip the colonial layers off the self, is a feature apparent in the text of Atwood. Clubbing these three different narrative voices into dialogue, the thesis attempts to examine the similarity of the agency seeking process in the context of preserving the cultural and theoretical boundaries dividing them. Womanism, as defined by Walker, is exceptionally important in this case, because it offers a rectification of the historical omissions of second-wave feminism, and a sense of caring about the survival of an entire people and connection to land and tradition. The contribution of Atwood brings on the ecofeminist dimension, which says that the marginalization of women cannot be discussed outside the exploitation of the natural world, thus broadening the horizons of the feminist enquiry into the environmental domain.

The synthesis of these views in a theoretical way provides the possibility to comprehend the ways the feminine subject maneuvers through the dialectic seeing and being seen, speaking and being silenced. As the research unfolds, the argument presents that the overlapping boundaries of Morrison, Atwood and Walker amount to a complete map of the twentieth century of the feminine state which portrays a path of the tragic loss of the self before the white gaze to the victorious restatement of the self in the form of writing and ritual. This introduction is then an ontological foundation that the margin is not a location of exile, but it is the base on which the new feminine subject is constructed which makes this comparative study an important contribution to the existing body of literature in feminism in the contemporary literature. The theoretical framework of the research introduced in Intersecting Margins: A Feminist Exploration of the Narratives of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood and Alice Walker has a strict interrogation of spatial and social metaphors of the concept of the margin. The margin is not only a deprivation and as bell hooks used to say, the place of radical openness and resistance in the modern feminist discourse. Additionally, to pursue the study of the margins of intersection is to begin to deal with the apparatus of intersectionality, the term that goes back to the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, which takes into account the fact that different kinds of social stratification, including race, gender, class, and colonial status never exist in isolation of each other but are all interwoven in a multifaceted web of oppression and agency. The feminine subject in the stories of Morrison, Atwood, and Walker lies in the intersection of these two systems. To Morrison, the margin is determined by the internal and external demands of the white visual regime where the black female child is driven to the background of human value since she will not be able to reflect the colonial aesthetic.

For Atwood, the margin takes on a post-colonial and ecological dimension, as the female protagonist navigates the borderlands between the civilized and the primitive, the colonizer and the colonized, and the human and the animal. For Walker, the margin is a

domestic and spiritual boundary where the womanist subject must reclaim the body and labor from the crushing weight of patriarchal violence. A feminist exploration of these narratives requires a departure from monolithic interpretations of womanhood; it demands an analysis that accounts for the specificities of the black experience in the American North and South as well as the ontological alienation of the Canadian wilderness. By theoretically aligning these diverse contexts, this introduction establishes the margin as a profound site of ontological inquiry where characters are not merely victims of geography but are active participants in the construction of a counter-narrative. The intersecting nature of these margins allows for a comparative dialogue that reveals how the female psyche responds to erasure, whether that erasure is driven by the cinematic gaze of Hollywood, the patriarchal silence of rural Georgia, or the technological intrusion of a modernizing Canada. This study therefore utilizes the margin as a lens through which to view the fragmentation and subsequent attempts at the reintegration of the feminine self.

The second movement of this introductory framework focuses on the transformative power of narrative as a tool for feminine reclamation and the shifting definitions of feminism and womanism that characterize the works of these three writers. Narrative, in this context, is treated as a performative act: a means by which the marginalized subject can reassemble a fractured history and assert a coherent identity. In the work of Morrison, the narrative serves as a site of memory, or rememory, where the trauma of the gaze is laid bare to challenge the homogenized metanarratives of Western beauty. In the prose of Walker, narrative takes on an epistolary and communal form, reflecting a womanist ethos that prioritizes the wholeness of the community and the spiritual liberation of the individual. In the text of Atwood, the narrative is an act of *Surfacing*, a linguistic and psychological diving into the depths of the past to strip away the colonial layers of the self. By bringing these three distinct narrative voices into conversation, the thesis explores the commonality of the quest for agency while respecting the

cultural and theoretical boundaries that separate them. The term womanism, as defined by Walker, is particularly crucial here as it provides a corrective to the historical exclusions of second-wave feminism, emphasizing a commitment to the survival of a whole people and a deep connection to the land and tradition. Atwood's contribution adds an ecofeminist layer, suggesting that the marginalization of women is inextricably linked to the exploitation of the natural world, thereby expanding the scope of the feminist exploration into the realm of the environmental.

Plausibly, the theoretical synthesis of these perspectives allows for a nuanced understanding of how the feminine subject navigates the dialectic of seeing and being seen, of speaking and being silenced. As the study progresses, the argument posits that the intersecting margins of Morrison, Atwood, and Walker provide a comprehensive map of the twentieth-century feminine condition, illustrating a trajectory from the tragic erasure of the self in the face of the white gaze to the triumphant assertion of the self through the act of writing and ritual. The introduction thus serves as an ontological foundation, defining the margin not as a place of exile, but as the ground upon which the new feminine subject is built, making this comparative study a vital contribution to the field of contemporary literary feminism.

A feminist study of these stories through Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* must therefore move away from the monolithic approach to womanhood; it must move towards a reading that takes into account the particularities of the black experience in the American North and South as well as the ontological alienation of the Canadian wilderness. Through the theoretical linking of these disparate worlds, this introduction posits the margin as a deeply rich location of ontological inquiry in which the characters are not simply victims of geography but active agents in the production of a counter-narrative. The intersecting of these margins enables a comparative reading that illustrates how the female psyche reacts to the erasure of self, whether this is

through the cinematic gaze of Hollywood, the patriarchal silence of rural Georgia, or the technological intrusion of a modernizing Canada. This study therefore employs the margin as a lens through which to examine the fragmentation and subsequent reintegration of the feminine self.

In the case with Atwood, the margin assumes the post-colonial and ecological circle, as the female protagonist has to live in the territory between the civilized and the primitive, the colonizer and the colonized, and the human and the animal. In the case of Walker, the margin is a national and spiritual border upon which the subject of the womanist should re-possess the body and labor under the oppressive load of patriarchal violence. To engage with these stories in a feminist way, one must leave the distinctions of womanhood behind; one needs to investigate in a manner that considers the particularities of the black experience in the American North and South and the ontological alienation of the Canadian wilderness. Theoretically harmonizing these various contexts, this introduction has created the margin as a profound location of ontological inquiry in which the characters are not victims of geography but agents of the creation of a counter-narrative. The overlapping of these margins enables there to be a comparative discourse, which unveils the response of the female psyche to erasure, be it it is the cinematic gaze of Hollywood, the patriarchal silence of rural Georgia or an intrusion of modernizing Canada through its technology. This study hence employs the margin as a prism through which to observe the fragmentation and the consequent efforts at the reintegration of the feminine self.

The second movement of this introduction structure is the transformative influence of the narrative as a way to feminine reclaiming and the evolving meaning of feminism and womanism that define the compositions of these three authors. Here Narrative is seen as a performative practice, as a way in which the marginalized subject is able to recreate a

discontinuous history and establish a continuous identity. The narrative is a locus of memory, or rememory, in the work of Morrison where the trauma of the gaze is dissected to attack the homogenized metanarratives of Western beauty. In Walker, narrative assumes an epistolary and communal role in the prose of a writer who adheres to a womanist ethos of considering the wholeness of the community and spiritual liberation of the individual. *Surfacing*, a linguistic, psychological plunging into the depths of the past to peel away the layers of colonialism of the self is what is occurring in the text of Atwood. The thesis introduces these three different narrative voices into dialogue to investigate the similarity of the agency search and still mind the cultural and theoretical frontiers between them. The term womanism as would be defined by Walker is really essential in this especially because it gives a corrective to the historical exclusions of the second-wave feminism, which takes into consideration a devotion to the existence of a entire folk and a profound affiliation to the land and practice. The addition of Atwood provides the ecofeminist dimension wherein the oppression of women is inseparably connected with the use of natural world, which enlarges the feminist exploration of the ecological world. The synthesis of these views by theory makes it possible to have a subtle idea on how the feminine subject can make its way through the dialectic of seeing and being seen, speaking and being silenced. The point of the argument as the study unfolds is that the overlap of the margins of the three writers, Morrison, Atwood and Walker, offers us an exhaustive map of the feminine condition of the twentieth century as it travels through the tragic obliteration of the self in the face of the white gaze and the triumphant self-assertion through the writing and the ritual. The introduction is therefore ontological in nature and the margin is not a place of exile but rather the platform on which the new feminine subject is created thus it is a crucial study contribution to the area of modern literary feminism.

Feminist analysis of these narratives with reference to *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood, and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker has to be a feminist

analysis that leaves behind the monolithic approach towards womanhood; an analysis that considers the specifics of the black experience in the American North and South and the ontological alienation of the Canadian wilderness. It is through the hypothetical association of these worlds which are so divergent in the proposed introduction that the margin is a profoundly rich site of ontological questioning where the characters are not merely victims of geography but participants in the generation of a counter-narrative. The overlapping of these margins allows a comparative reading which depicts the response of the female psyche to the erasure of self in the form of the cinematic gaze of Hollywood, the patriarchal silence of rural Georgia, or the technological infiltration of a modernizing Canada. It is this fragmentation and subsequent re-integration of the feminine self that has been viewed through the prism of this study which uses the margin to view the process through. The second movement of this introductory structure is focused on the transforming nature of narrative as a tactic of feminine reclaiming and definitions of feminism and womanism that could be traced in the texts of these three authors. Narrative in this case is viewed as performative act- a tactic through which the marginal subject will be able to fractured history back together to form a coherent identity. The story in the text of Morrison, then, is a place of memory or rememory where the wound of the gaze is revealed so as to break up the homogenized metanarratives of Western beauty. The exegesis of Walker in the prose form is epistolary and communal with an ideology of womanism perceiving community in its entirety and freedom of the soul through spirituality. This *Surfacing*, which is a linguistic and psychological immersion into the depths of the past to eliminate the colonial layers of the self, is also in the text of Atwood.

The thesis explores the universality of the search of agency through the intersection of these three very different voices in the narrative and at the same time remains conscious of the cultural and theoretical differences that makes these narratives unique. Especially significant in this regard is the use of the term womanism as defined by Walker, as it is a redress to the

exclusions of the second-wave feminism and an interest in that the people live on and that they are deeply linked to the land and the tradition. The contribution of Atwood to this intersection is that ecofeminist approach in which the oppression of women is intrinsically related to the oppression of nature, thereby expanding the feminist investigation of the field of the environmental. A complex interpretation of how the feminine subject can be subject to dialectic of seeing and being seen, speaking and being silenced can be achieved through the theoretical combination of these notions. As the thesis progresses, the argument is that the overlapping margins of Morrison, Atwood and Walker will provide us with a total map of the feminine experience of the twentieth century, a map that can trace the path, as we move away the tragic loss of the self before the white gaze and in the face of which, to the decisive statement of the self as we do it in writing and ritual. The introduction, in turn, provides an ontological crunching of the margin as the place where the new feminine subject is built, and, to the extent, the present literary feminist canon cannot do without this comparative study. Biography of the

Introduction to the Chosen Authors and the Works

The biographical and literary topographies of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Walker represent a remarkable cross-section of the twentieth-century feminine intellectual tradition every author with her own interpretation of the discourse on marginality and resistance. Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison (1931-2019) is essentially obsessed with the restoration of African American history and psychic impact of racialized existence. Her constitutive text of this analysis of a destructive power of the white gaze is her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970). *The Bluest Eye* is a work of 1970, the setting of which is Lorain, Ohio in the early 1940s, and the story is based on the character of Pecola Breedlove who is an eleven-year-old black girl and has internalized the colonial ideal of beauty to the extent of psychic breakdown. Through the characters, Pecola, the protagonist, is the

deconstruction of the concept of the Western aesthetics as the Grand Narrative because she is the revelation of how the desire to have the blue eyes is a replacement of the more generic desire to have the human recognition and protection in the city that invisibilizes blackness or makes it a monstrosity.

Margaret Atwood (b. 1939), who is regarded as the most renowned man of letters in Canada and the emblem of the second wave of feminist movement, shifts the question to the intersection of national identity, gender and nature. The second novel, *Surfacing* (1972), by Atwood provides a sharp contrast to the city environment of racial trauma of Morrison setting the feminine crisis in the Canadian wilderness. The protagonist, a nameless woman, who goes back to her childhood house to find her lost father, is led on a trip of psychological and linguistic un-naming. It is a post-colonial critique on Americanizing and a feminist re-invention of the body where the narrator pulls away the layers of civilization created to get down to the primitive, stripped-down self. Atwood has played her part in the thesis through her ecofeminist approach which is the oppression of the female subject being projected in the oppression of the landscape. Alice Walker (b. 1944) poses the question with the notion of womanism, which is a term she had coined in her notorious definition of a race-, culture-, and community-specific feminism that allows Black women to survive. Her masterpiece of epistolary literary works, *The Color Purple* (1982) represents the biography of a Black woman, Celie, who lives in the American South in the country and who manages to survive in the conditions of the repressive regime of domestic violence and patriarchal deletion. The story of Celie is a narrative of successful transformation of the object of labor to the subject of agency, unlike Pecola Breedlove. Clee plays the role of creating a personal account through her letters to God and subsequent letters to her sister Nettie that subsequently develops into a social one. This thesis is highly reliant on the work of Walker because it provides the paradigm of reclamation, which shows how the various uspins of poverty, race, and gender can be overcome through the process

of sisterhood, art, and the disregard of the old patriarchal divinity and the acceptance of a ubiquitous spirituality. Although these three texts are highly disparate in regards to their geographical and cultural location points of origin, they are united by the fact that they are preoccupied with the marginalized figure of feminine subject and the opposition to totalizing power of the Other. Critical analysis of the gaze in Morrison, deconstructing identity in the text of Atwood, and empowering womanist voice in the text of Walker provide a full road map of how these women go about trying to survive and subvert the systems that seek to marginalize them. In the comparative study of *The Bluest Eye*, *Surfacing*, and *The Color Purple*, the study identifies the patterns of trauma and the opportunities of healing that are created at the convergent edges of the feminine experience.

Literature Review

The criticism and the discussion of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood and Alice Walker has evolved throughout several decades of feminist, post-colonial and African American literature studies and has established an intricate inter-textual conversation regarding the essence of marginality. In the specific example of *The Bluest Eye* by Morrison, the initial one was focused on the psychological trauma of internalized racism. The focus on the visual regime has however taken a more intricate turn in recent studies. Such critics as bell hooks in Black Looks: Race and Representation invoke this notion of the white gaze, insisting that such practice of looking is political act, and may either reassert or destroy power relations (hooks, 1992). This reading is was complemented by the analysis of Michael Foucault on the panopticon which has been extended to the Lorain, Ohio by a number of critics to imply that the black female child is always under the self-surveillance. Critics have, more recently, shifted their focus to the intersectional failure of the community in the work of Morrison, which, as they argue, is not a mere psychosis of Pecola Breedlove but a structural erasure that has been facilitated by the society that has forgotten its own culture in the favor of a white aesthetic ideal.

The reception of *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood has been a change of the nationalist reading to the more complicated ecofeminist and post-colonial one. Atwood presents a heroine in her Canadian identity analysis that has to fight the so-called language of the hunter. This language battle has been identified by experts like Karen Warren to be the most important principle of ecofeminism where the logic of domination that underlies the exploitation of nature is the same logic underpinning the subordination of women (Warren 4). The journey of the heroine into the primitive world, in the literature around Surfering, does not pass as insanity but as a *Surfacing* out of the artificial world of a patriarchal and technologically obsessed society. The silence of the heroine at the concluding part of the novel has been interpreted as a radical gesture against a colonized language which cannot express a genuine feminine subjectivity (Atwood 191). This literature identifies the connection of female body and the Canadian landscape as a colonized land that fights against the waves of Americanization.

The Color Purple by Alice Walker has led to a paradigm shift in the formalization of Womanism which is a theory that distinguishes itself in the area of its preoccupation with the health of the community and the intersection of race and gender with feminism which is white in nature. According to Walker herself, a womanist is a person who is dedicated to the survival and the wholeness of complete people, both male and female (Walker xi). The study of the novel usually challenges the epistolary genre as a form of recovering the subaltern voice. Patricia Hill Collins, in her article, holds that the literature of Black women is a space of breaking silence, where writing is itself a political act of self-defining and defining oneself against domestic and systemic violence (Collins 123).

Instances of how Walker has portrayed the concept of sisterhood between Celie and Shug Avery have been hailed as a right step in that it transforms the Black female subject matter into the sidelines of labor to the center of agency. According to the critical literature, Pecola, the character of Morrison, is the reflection of the inability to cross the margin, whereas Celie,

the character of Walker, is the reflection of the success of the womanist reconstruction of the self into the pregnancy of the quilt, storytelling, and spiritual liberation. The intersection of all these literary giants demonstrates that, there is an overall scholarly interest in the politics of the body. The literature review indicates that feminine subject is constantly depicted as a place of conflict between opposing ideologies, whether it is the Black body in Morrison and Walker or the female body in nature in Atwood. It has been recently fashionable to take an intersectional approach, following the lead of Kimberlé Crenshaw, to analyze the intersection of these narratives. According to Crenshaw, the experience of being a black woman simply cannot be perceived in black and woman categories, but it needs to incorporate the relations between the two (Crenshaw 149). The intersectional framework will also enable this research to address this gap of the literature by focusing on the construction and traversal of the so-called margins across various cultural and national frontiers applied to Atwood as well. This review of the literature demonstrates that the combination of narratives provided by Morrison, Atwood, and Walker offers a mappish of the feminine experience of the twentieth century, the experience of visual and linguistic effacement to that of the sovereign self-expression. The increasing area of serious analysis is in regard to the Aesthetics of Silence and Non-Linguistic Resistance within the writings of Morrison, Atwood and Walker. Although the conventional feminist theory emphasizes the theme of attaining voice, new theorists have been seeking to re-evaluate the aspect of silence in these stories. Silence in the example of *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood is not a lack of the sound but a profound rejection of the symbolic order. The heroine is finally denied any access to logos, history, and language in her final withdrawal into a wordless and bestial space, as literary theorists have remarked, this denial of the logos of the patriarchy, the traditional use of language to chart and dominate the feminine (Atwood 191). This would be in line with ecofeminist readings that interpret language as a device of environmental as well as gendered mapping in its own right that would circumscribe the unstable identity of the

female subject. Such a scenario is more tragic in the Aesthetics of Silence in Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, in a comparative mode. Pecola Breedlove is in contrast silenced by the noise of the white visual regime, unlike the narrator in Atwood, who chooses to remain silent in her struggle of un-naming the colonizer.

The ideology of Social Death has been used by the critical interpretation of the 21st century, in which Pecola finally succumbs to insanity is seen to be the expression of a psychic silence, the total loss of connection to a world that is unable to provide her with a sense of self-worth. The silence of the marigolds in the novel, critics have argued, has been a cosmic and social indifference towards the ills and hardships of Black women and this creates what is termed as a void of representation (Morrison 204). This is an important consideration that makes us pay attention to the difference between silence as agency (in Atwood) and silence as erasure (in Morrison).

The transition between silence and Active Inscription can be analyzed best through the literature on the book The color Purple by Alice Walker. Modern readings have ceased to refer to the letters as they appear and shifted to the so-called material culture embodied in the novel, specifically quilting. The quilting practice is regarded as a form of visual story, which deals with the domestic periphery. According to Walker, the creativity of black women was historically manifested in low-art activities like gardening and sewing because they did not have access to the high art (Walker 233). This has been built up on because Celie is not just successful in business when she makes pants but it is a somatic reclamation. This literature indicates that, according to Walker, the margin represents a place of creative change, where the debris of a broken life scraps of material, fragments of letters, etc. are turned into a complete self. Lastly, another theoretical overlap of current PhD-level discourse is the application of "Spatial Theory" to these stories. This has since been interpreted as a Third Space in which the distinction between center and periphery and male and female become ambiguous as promoted

by Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha. The combination of these spatial critiques with the intersectional discourse of race and gender leads to the contemporary research discovering a shared ontological map in the three narratives where the protagonist is forced to go through the margin to attain a state of so-called sovereign existence (Crenshaw 152).

Objective of the Study

The approach to research adopted in the study is primarily a qualitative one based on a comparative literature review that relies on the theoretical concepts of Black Feminism, Womanism, and Post-colonial Ecofeminism. The main analytical prism is intersectionality as it enables analyzing how the intersecting systems of oppression (namely, race, gender, and coloniality) are portrayed in the works of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Walker. This study takes an approach of close-reading *The Bluest Eye*, *Surfacing*, and The Color Purple, which involves the study of the somatic and visual identifiers of identity and decoding the way in which the female body becomes a site of both trauma and resistance. On the theoretical level, the postmodern incredulity toward metanarratives is considered in the study to challenge Western aesthetic and linguistic standards whereas the phenomenological inquiry is employed to examine the lived experiences of the main characters as they find themselves pushed to the fringe and the middle of their own narratives. To promote an intense comparative discussion, the approach coordinates the investigation around three thematic axes, such as the devastating force of the external gaze, the use of silence and linguistic un-naming as the means of defense, and the ultimate re-appropriation of agency, through creative and communal performance. Combining all these different critical views, the study transcends a mere thematic comparison with an ontological exploration of the margin as a transitional space. Such qualitative approach guarantees the respect of each text with its cultural and historical background and makes it possible to develop a coherent theory in terms of reconstruction of feminine subjectivity in the modern literature.

Research Methodology

The primary and secondary sources can be used for data collection. The primary includes Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. In the secondary sources, the researcher may include reviews, articles, and interviews of the writer published in various journals, magazines, and books. Furthermore, the information from the internet is also used as a secondary source.

The research methodology employed in this study is predominantly qualitative, utilizing a comparative literary analysis grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Black Feminism, Womanism, and Post-colonial Ecofeminism. The primary analytical lens is intersectionality, which allows for the interrogation of how overlapping systems of oppression—specifically race, gender, and coloniality—manifest within the narratives of Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Walker. The study adopts a close-reading approach to the primary texts, *The Bluest Eye*, *Surfacing*, and *The Color Purple*, focusing on the "somatic" and "visual" markers of identity to decode how the female body becomes a site of both trauma and resistance. Theoretically, the study incorporates the postmodern "incredulity toward metanarratives" to challenge Western aesthetic and linguistic standards, while utilizing phenomenological inquiry to explore the lived experiences of the protagonists as they move from the periphery to the center of their own narratives. To confirm a rigorous comparative dialogue, the methodology subsequently organizes the inquiry around three thematic axes: the destructive power of the external gaze, the role of silence and linguistic "un-naming" as defensive mechanisms, and the eventual reclamation of agency through creative and communal performance. Additionally, synthesizing these diverse critical perspectives, the research moves beyond a simple thematic comparison to a deeper ontological investigation of the "margin" as a transformative space. This qualitative strategy ensures that each text is respected for its

specific cultural and historical context while allowing for the emergence of a unified theory regarding the reconstruction of feminine subjectivity in contemporary literature.

Chapter Plan

Chapter 1: The Introduction the Architecture of the Margin.

This chapter is the foundational one, that sets the parameters of the study in terms of theory and history. It blends the three chosen the main works, *The Bluest Eye*, *Surfacing*, and *The Color Purple*, in the framework of the feminine crisis of the middle of the twentieth century. The chapter establishes the key terms, such as the terms of Kimberly Crenshaw, who defines the concept of intersectionality, or the terms of Alice Walker, who defines such a concept as womanism, and the terms of the postmodern era which is the incredulity to metanarratives. It gives the Statement of the Problem, the Research Objectives, and the Methodology with the argument that the margin acts as a transformative site that the female subject is dismantled by the outside force, and rebuilt with narrative agency. The chapter ends with the Literature Review which puts the research in the context of the current critical discussion of Black Feminism and Post-colonial Ecofeminism.

Chapter 2: Scopic Regime and Ontological Erasure in *The Bluest Eye*.

Chapter 2 attempts to explore the devastating force of the white gaze as a colonial machine through *The Bluest Eye*. This establishes the conditions of human value. Using the tragic character of Pecola Breedlove as the point of focus, one will examine how the internalisation of the beauty ideology of west (that was personified by Shirley Temple) results in the disintegration of Black memory and self-hate. The chapter applies the Lacanian psychoanalysis to consider the failure of the Black female child in the mirror stage where the child has no reflection in the social order. It compares the psychic breakdown of Pecola with the

oppositional gaze and doll-dismaying of Claudia MacTeer, and states the former as early, though incomplete, forms of mini-narratives of resistance to the metanarrative of whiteness.

Chapter 3: Echoes of the Wild: Ecofeminism and the Un-Naming of the Self in *Surfacing*.

The emphasis of chapter 3 is built on *Surfacing*, wherein the discussion circumvents around the theme: Margaret Atwood's agreement of gender with national identity and the environment. It explores the character of the main character as she ventures in to the wilderness of Canada as a metaphorical and literal step to the fringe of civilization. The chapter uses an ecofeminist approach by trying to suggest that the mental breakdown of the narrator is a conscious refusal of the notion of Americanization and the language of patriarchy. The main idea of this analysis is the notion of un-naming, the process of depriving the narrator of labels of colonialization in favor of a necessary, somatic identity. The conclusion of the chapter is that via reconnection to the primal and to the animal, the narrator reaches a *Surfacing* of the self that is in opposition to the binary thinking of the colonizer.

Chapter 4: Womanist Synthesis The Epistolary Agency and Communal Healing of *The Color Purple*.

This chapter delves into the "Womanism" framework propounded by Alice Walker as a process of transitioning to being marginalized to being sovereign. The comparison is done between the way Celie started as the object of patriarchal labor and by the end of the story, she becomes the subject of creative agency. It questions the technology (letter-writing) of the self that enables Celie to break the silence of her domestic margin. Another aspect that is explored in the chapter is the politics of the quilt and the transformational force of sisterhood and alternative spirituality as practiced by Shug Avery. Reclaiming her own body and her own voice, Celie becomes the triumphant opposite of the Pecola that Morrison wrote about, showing how the

intersecting margins of race, gender and poverty could be worked into a wholesome and empowered identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Towards a Sovereignty of the Soul.

The last chapter that is named Conclusion is a synthesis of all the chapter-analysis to offer a general response to the research questions. It opposes the different approaches to resistance: visual iconoclasm by Morrison, ecological un-naming by Atwood, and womanist articulation by Walker. The conclusion is based on the fact that the so-called margin, seemingly a state of exile, still serves as the the sole basis of the reconstruction of a decolonized feminine subjectivity. It recaps the contribution of the study to the modern feminist literary theory and provides recommendations to further studies especially on the use of somatic memory in transnational stories. The thesis concludes by stating that the process of telling the story is the greatest means of reclaiming a soul disrupted by the white visual and patriarchal jurisdictions.

Conclusively, this study shows that the "margin" is not only a place of systemic erasure but an effective venue on the ontological reclamation. Through the analysis of overlapping paths of the white gaze, alienation of colonialism, and patriarchal violence in the works of Morrison and Atwood and Walker, the study finds that although the forces of the white gaze, colonial alienation, and patriarchal violence strive to break feminine self, narrative agency offers the necessary instruments to recreate the feminine self. The shift between the tragic silence of *The Bluest Eye* to the eco-phenomenological *Surfacing* of Atwood and the victorious womanist voice of *The Color Purple* depicts a mass movement to sovereignty. Finally, according to the thesis, intersecting margins are not only the frontiers of exclusion, but rather the revolutionary space, in which a decolonized and whole-subject feminine subjectivity is created, providing an ultimate map of resistance in modern literature.

Scope and Limitation

This study is narrowed down to the comparative study of feminine subjectivity in the intersecting periphery of race, nationality and gender as portrayed in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. Although the research is based on the general theoretical foundations of Intersectionality, Womanism, and Ecofeminism, its main point of reference is situated in the narrational techniques employed by the three writers in their attempts to make it through self-dissolution into self-recovery in the exact socio-literary context of the 1970s and 1980s. The main drawback of the work is that it covers single representative texts of each of the authors and does not allow fully surveying their literary works or the subsequent development of their philosophy of feminism. Moreover, the study does not seek to give the exhaustive history of the feminist movements in the United States and Canada, but instead dwells on the ontological and psychological experiences of the lead characters in the books. Since the methodology is qualitative and text based, the results are not meant to be generalized statistical data of all women writing during the period but instead provide profound interpretative information of the specific texts. By admitting these limits, the research has a high level of strict concentration on the distinct linguistic and visual processes by which these particular authors re-brand the so-called margin as a resistance space.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *Surfacing*. 1972. McClelland and Stewart, 1994.

Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. Routledge, 1994.

Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2000.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." Stanford Law Review, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–99.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Pantheon, 1977.

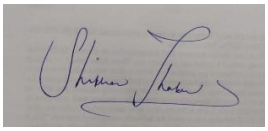
Hooks, Bell. Black Looks: Race and Representation. South End Press, 1992.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. 1970. Vintage International, 2007.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. 1982. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Warren, Karen J., editor. Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature. Indiana University Press, 1997.



Signature of Guide

Signature of Scholar